



## Human Rights Commission Minutes

Date: Wednesday, March 20, 2024

Time: 8:00 PM

Location: 27 Maple Street, HHS Conference Room, 2nd Floor

Conducted by Hybrid (Remote and In-Person)

**\*Notice to the Public on meeting privacy\*** To prevent abuse of video conferencing technology (i.e., Zoom Bombing), all participants, including members of the public, wishing to engage via the Zoom App must register for each meeting and will notice multi-step authentication protocols. Please allow additional time to join the meeting. Further, members of the public who wish to participate without providing their names may still do so by registering to receive the meeting info and using the dial-in telephone information provided.

*On March 29, 2023, Governor Healey signed into law a supplemental budget bill that extends the temporary provisions pertaining to the Open Meeting Law to March 31, 2025. Specifically, this extension allows public bodies to continue holding meetings remotely without a quorum of the public body being physically present at a meeting location and to provide "adequate, alternative" access to remote meetings. The language does not make any substantive changes to the Open Meeting Law other than extending the expiration date of the temporary provisions regarding remote meetings from March 31, 2023, to March 31, 2025.*

<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/updated-guidance-on-holding-meetings-pursuant-to-the-act-extending-certain-covid-19-measures>

Present: Co-chairs Griffin Jones and Drake Pusey; Commissioners: Rajeev Soneja, Crystal Beauchemin, Gary Horowitz, Kristen Bauer, Laurie Key, Kevin Bryant, Christine Carney, Scott Jones

Absent: Sharon Grossman

Staff: Jill Harvey (DEI Director) Sadie Ford (intern)

Guests: Rebecca Gruber, Hira Ambreen, Anju, Chadi, David, Altaf Saadi, Sahar, Lena, David Fleig, Chadi Salamoun, Anju Jogleker, Lina Smith

### Agenda

1. Remote Meeting Notice and Land Acknowledgement - hybrid allowed by open meeting law
2. Review of February 2024 Meeting Minutes

Motion to accept: Rajeev Soneja and Kristen Bauer seconds, unanimously approved

### 3. Community Input:

- Rebecca Gruber: Talked about an article on the front page of the Boston Globe discussing anti-migrant statements made by members of other local communities, and wants to suggest a statement made by AHRC to say that Arlington is a welcoming community.
- Chadi Salamoun: Thanks the commission for their work; wants the AHRC to create a proclamation to call for a ceasefire in Palestine and pass it on to the select board because the genocide is impacting people in Arlington, there has been hate crimes and violent rhetoric coming from both sides of the conflict. It doesn't matter when the conflict started, only that we bring it to an end. An immediate ceasefire is the only way to protect innocent civilians.
- Anju J; Wants AHRC to create a proclamation for a ceasefire in Gaza and pass it on to the Select Board for approval, and for the AHRC to respond strongly to the denial of human rights in Gaza by Israel. There are many benefits to a ceasefire, mainly protecting people in Gaza.
- David F. - Here to urge AHRC to pass a permanent ceasefire, have to acknowledge limitations in our small community, but the issue will affect the residents of Arlington. We need to call a ceasefire in our community because of the concept of universal human rights; we need to take this step.
- Altaf Saadi: Here to request that we send a ceasefire proclamation to the Select Board for a vote because there are few hospitals that are functioning left in Gaza because of the bombings, Palestinians are being killed not only by bombs, but lack of medical care, starvation, there has been kidnapping and killing of medical care workers there, there have been attacks on ambulances who were trying to help people. It would be very impactful for the AHRC to take a stronger stance on a proclamation or a ceasefire.
- Sahar: Here to advocate for a ceasefire resolution for all those who are suffering in the conflict.
- Note by commissioner: we have a procedure for considering statements by the community.
- Lena: Would love for Arlington to call for a permanent ceasefire; she grew up in the war for the first ten years; it is more of an extermination than anything. We have to act, the people and the grassroots movements have to send a strong message through calls for ceasefire to get people to reflect. The more they hear people call for ceasefire, the more they'll think that a cease-fire was the right decision.
- Question by Commissioner Griffin Jones: How can the AHRC help to make a greater impact to help make the people of Arlington feel safer?

Answer to the question:

- Chadi S.: A proclamation is really important, because it goes a long way for those in Arlington who don't feel welcome here, the dehumanization of so many groups has to be connected, if it was any other group we were speaking of, this conflict/genocide wouldn't have gone on as long as it has.
- Anju: When she arrived in US in 1979 from India, she came as a student, it's really interesting to look at the biases and prejudices we carry, we need to get past them and see everyone as a human being, in the community we need to spread awareness that people are experiencing this pain and prejudice.

- Note by Commissioners: The AHRC statements are made by us and not the town.
- Altaf Saadi: There are so many factors that go into moving, looking at AHRC website helped factor into why she moved to Arlington, definitely impacts people's level of comfort and helps them feel welcome.

#### 4. DEI Updates

- a. Second session of the REACH group with the other municipalities, right now are refining goals; the homework is working on a specific model (the ACT model) to understand how messaging has an impact; it was a meeting where people were able to have really hard conversations about race and how different experiences intersect.
- b. The language access guide is finally available, it will go out soon; full guide on best practices, free translation options, town is trying to help figure out how to make this information more accessible.
- c. School's Rainbow Committee, looking to work with GLSEN to work on making a more welcoming environment to LGBTQ+ youth, looking to open the program/training in June, probably will be hosted in Town Hall, they already have a lot of their knowledge and curriculum set, but they will tailor it to what we need, place/time isn't set yet.
- d. Promoting the Know Your Rights training, Tuesday and Wednesday, Tuesday is in person is at 6 PM, the one on Zoom (preregister) on Wednesday is at 6:30 PM.

#### 5. Co-Chairs Report

- a. APD Meeting with Chief Flaherty - there were not any incidents to talk about
  - Officer Pedrini has retired.
  - There is an upcoming rehearsal for next year's 250th reenactment of the Lexington-Concord battle, the rehearsal will be happening on a Sunday, April 14.
  - The APD hasn't been in AHRC meetings for a while because of union and contracting, but we miss their presence here.
- b. Status of Arlington Civilian Police Advisory Commission
  - First meeting occurred, chose Chair and Deputy Chair, they are operational, but they haven't chosen a schedule yet, they are public meetings.
  - Wondered if our AHRC appointee could send the co-chairs a regular email or go to AHRC meetings to give feedback to talk about the ACPAC commission.
- c. Meeting with DEI Co-Chairs
- d. Budgeting update
  - We put our budget together and a "here's what we would do with an extra \$2500".
  - Got called to the Finance Committee and walked through the events of AHRC and the costs.
  - There are 2 people on the Finance Committee who wanted to talk about the email needs, co-chairs are happy to talk to them about this.
  - Have proposed new AHRC budget of \$10,000.
  - Revolving fund was only created for educational purposes, and we don't want to dip into it too much.
  - Black History month costs came out a little under estimate.
  - Day of Learning costs are resolved.
  - It would be good for the Events and Outreach Working group to start stocking up on supplies for vigils and events.

- AAPI month event, there is a Facebook group generating ideas.
- Hira suggested events and outreach we could engage in.

## 6. Incidents & Complaints

### a. Commissioner Updates

- Griffin Jones is working on an incident at the Hardy School -a student made a slur, Griffin will be attending a PTO meeting there to help them work through that.
- Schools aren't really following protocol in problems like this, problem is being responded to by the Schools and Education Working Group
- AHS, Griffin is handling a perceived incident regarding gender identity, complaint was submitted by a parent, the child was accepted in a form when submitted as female, but not when submitted in form as transgender, the person who submitted the form has not responded significantly to outreach.
- AHRC talked to Chief Flaherty about ongoing Zionist graffiti at the Thorndike underpass, which is MA DOT property. It's a known issue.
- Christine is going to talk to DPW about how the AHRC will be contacted about the concerning graffiti when it is first reported to the town.

### b. APD Updates

### c. Peter Pan productions in Arlington

- Both productions did a good job with handling the sensitivity of Peter Pan

### d. Incident Handling

- March: Commissioner Grossman  
- Griffin has stepped in while she is traveling
- April: Commissioner Griffin Jones
- May: Commissioner Kevin Bryant

## 7. Working Group Updates

### a. Schools & Education

- Principal Meringer is coming in May, residents of Arlington that attend Temple Isaiah in Lexington invited Arlington Public Schools to an on-line presentation Lappin Foundation's Virtual Summit about the U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism in K-12 Schools) that other local school districts are attending
- Ottoson held a Civics Day, (March 20) there was no antiracism panel since not enough students registered for it; students were very engaged in the road safety panel, Commissioner Soneja focused on the Human Rights point of road safety.

### b. Outreach / Events

- There were a couple of different sessions to review the Day of Learning, it was successful but participation was limited, location was problematic
- There is interest in partnering with Rainbow Commission again, the Day of Learning title also may be used for other events
- The Black History Month posters are getting fixed
- Rajeev reached out to the AAPI group at AHS. There is the Muslims at AHS group and they are celebrating in a few ways at AHS. The teacher asked AHRC for help with supporting those events.
- Melrose HRC is doing an Iftar, could we promote it or help them with it. Christine is reaching out to the Melrose HRC to see what AHRC can do to help
- Events Working Group has 2,000 dollars for spending and they can help AHS events with that.

- Last Tuesday in May the Arlington Historical Society is presenting an event that AHRC is co-sponsoring
- There is an anti-religious/bias event hopefully in May
- March Coffee Chat: Commissioners Soneja and BryantRajeev & Kevin at Cafe Nero, Tuesday March 26 630-730 pm, same time as the Know Your Rights event

c. Communications

- Instagram and Facebook are our main channels at this point; the website is a place to promote too.
- There were some doubts about land acknowledgement because there have been some other nations who have lived here before, there has been discussion about this, Arlington is considered Massachusetts territory, land acknowledgement was written by them.
- Museum in Arlington is looking to get a companion sign to the Hunter statue explaining that while artist's intentions were good, he did not actually base it on a member of the Massachusetts tribe
- There is a coalition between Arlington and some other communities working on a project 250 event
- Plan for newsletter
- Should be a joint calendar between Events/Outreach and Communications Working Groups and DEI? E&O WG and G. Jones will be point on this, drawing information from Jill's master calendar
  - Could ask commissioners and community to contribute to information on events and holidays and other information to the newsletter
  - Waiting for IT to fix emails so people can see the newsletters as not spam

d. Event Against Anti-Semitism (Commissioners Bryant, Scott Jones, and Carney)

- They are trying to do event on religious bias and persecution and give a background on it and have a panel of faith leaders to talk about their experiences, hopefully will happen in May

e. Training (Commissioners Scott Jones and Griffin Jones)

- Conflict resolution training, 3/26 (same day as the coffee chat, 250 meeting, and Know Your Rights)
- There is a training that we can sign up for that we have the budget for, public meeting law allows things outside the meetings for Commission purposes, such trainings.
- Drake will send out information about the training.

8. MAHRC Update (Commissioner Soneja)

a. Hingham statement supporting the Palestinian community

- Meeting was focused on the statement, but there was also an update on the training kits.
- There is an upcoming meeting next week.
- Background of statement, Palestinian community in Hingham approached HRC in Hingham to talk about them being marginalized, people are feeling incidents of hate speech.
- Hingham wants to issue a statement but felt they'd be targeted as a group, asked other Mass HRCs to cosign so they would have some safety.
  - Some people felt that there was too much focus on the war in Gaza.

- Statement was felt that it is needed because people are being afraid to speak up about incidents, no-anti-incidents being reported in Arlington, people are just afraid to report it, need statement to help emphasize these fears and how we need to change as a community.
- Resolution isn't known, the communities are discussing within themselves about the way forward.
- Hingham has drafted the statement, and is asking other individual HRC's to cosign; it would have multiple signatures from different communities.
  - We've done things like this in the past without having to debate, but we have to be comfortable with the content.
  - The Hingham one is just a sentiment, it makes it safer, and it is something that no one can't agree with.
- Are we going to consider a ceasefire statement and this.
  - Both are time-sensitive, keeping them separate would let something get through faster.
  - The ceasefire ask has been brought by the community, would it be possible to do a separate meeting on this to be able to specifically focus on it? We can't discuss what's not on the agenda.
  - We could respond directly to the group requesting the ceasefire, to tell them that a statement is in the works.
  - Do we have to hold some action/event to help the community learn about our Arab and Palestinian community in Arlington, the statement puts that action as something that's aspirational.
- **Motion** - the AHRC will cosign the statement as presented by Hingham by Commissioner Soneja, Co-chair Pusey seconded.
- **Discussion:** is this a calling to the community, or a question, what work and how would we do it? It is a very strong statement that says that we are doing something that we are not currently doing, it's not comfortable to say that we are doing something when we are not.
- Are we willing to live up to the Hingham statement? Yes.
- By addressing one community when it is inextricably linked to another community makes it seem like we don't want the other community to be safe.
  - Should we reach out to impacted communities before releasing statements such as this to hear how the statements are perceived?
  - We have to consider people where they are and by themselves, Palestinian people are always viewed in conjunction with the historical nature of the conflict, they have always been marginalized, people need to be seen as who they are and what they feel, not based on the history of something.
  - Statement is about viewing them as human beings in their own rights.
  - It would be good to have another meeting for the two main items be the Hingham statement and the cease-fire statement.
  - If we don't cosign the Hingham statement right now, it's a decision to table the decision about the motion.
  - The Hingham HRC is asking for people to cosign based on a safety standpoint, but there hasn't been a decision on timeline and by what time they need to put out this statement.
  - Did we decide on steps for action statements - yes.
    - The gist was we really only consider statements that have a local impact, we delegate to co-chairs if there is a time-sensitive need, but the Hingham statement may not qualify.

- If we follow up this motion with a no, does that mean we can't make another motion at a future meeting.
- These protocols are not set in stone, co-signing a statement was never a consideration when we made the steps.
- Rebuttal, by co-signing onto it, we are saying it's Arlington's statement.
- After a motion is made you can table it- discussing it together with the ceasefire statement special meeting would be good.
- **Commissioner Bauer moves to table, Commissioner S. Jones seconds.**
- **Co-chair Pusey amends the motion** to table the discussion about the Hingham statement and the community input to a special meeting that will happen before the next monthly meeting
  - **Commissioner Carney seconds amendment**
  - **Vote for the amended motion:** unanimously passed
- Discuss: what would agenda be for special meeting, the motion should include when we discuss it and what will the agenda be about

#### 9. Announcements

- Talk about the picketing at the next meeting on April 10th.

#### 10. Adjournment

Commissioner Carney moves to adjourn, Commissioner Bauer seconds, unanimously passes **Next monthly meeting:** (Moved to second Wednesday) Wednesday, April 10, 2024, 8:00 PM

Anyone needing accessibility information or assistance to attend this meeting should contact Tim Ross at [tross@town.arlington.ma.us](mailto:tross@town.arlington.ma.us). This meeting is open to all interested individuals.